DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 340 684 SP 033 495

TITLE	The Role of Paraprofessionals in Utah Schools: The Selection: Preparation, and Utilization of Paraprofessionals in Education.
INSTITUTION	Utah State Board of Education, Salt Lake City.
PUB DATE	Oct 90
NOTE	23p.; Cover title is: "Paraprofessionals in Utah Schools." This booklet is a revised edition of "Educational Aides."
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; Occupational Information; *Paraprofessional School Personnel; Personnel Evaluation; *Personnel Management; Personnel Policy; Personnel Selection; *Role Perception; *School Aides
IDENTIFIERS	*Utah

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this publication is to recognize the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals in education; ways they are used in the classroom; and how they are selected and trained. The philosophical basis for the use of paraprofessionals in education is that they provide educators more time to practice, and to reflect on, their professional responsibilities and opportunities. They augment, rather than replace, certified educators. The paraprofessional is at all times an assistant and responsible to a member of the professional staff. Professional assignments may not be delegated to a paraprofessional. The educator's primary responsibility is to the children; whereas, the primary responsibility of the paraprofessional is to the educator. The booklet is organized into seven sections as follows: (1) a position statement with respect to paraprofessionals in education; (2) definitions of professional personnel and paraprofessionals; (3) keys to successful programs; (4) recruitment and selection; (5) preservice and inservice organization and training; (6) examples of appropriate and inappropriate tasks for paraprofessionals; and (7) a paraprofessional evaluation form. (LL)

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THE ROLE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS IN UTAH SCHOOLS

The Selection, Preparation, and Utilization of Paraprofessionals in Education

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Jay B. Taggart
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

UTAH EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
H. Lowell Baum
Executive Director

October 1990

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The education I propose includes all that is proper for a man, and is one which all men who are born into this world should share. . . .

Our first wish is that all men should be educated to full humanity; not only one individual, nor a few, nor many, but all men together and single, young and old, rich and poor, of high and lowly birth, men and women -- in a word, all whose fate is to be born human beings; so that at last the whole of the human race may become educated, men of all ages, all conditions, both sexes and all nations.

Our second wish is that every man should be wholly educated, rightly formed not only in one single matter or in a few or even in many but in all things which perfect human nature. . . .

John Amos Comenius

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FOREWORD

The Utah State Board of Education and the Utah Education Association present this revised edition of the original Educational Aides booklet as they recognize that the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals in education have changed dramatically since it was published in 1973. In the recent wave of educational reform, however, little attention has been paid as to how they are used in the classroom or to the ways they are selected, trained, and utilized.

Appreciation is expressed to the following people who participated in the preparation of this revised edition: Betty Condie, Associate Executive Director and Director of Professional Development, Utah Education Association; Katherine M. Olsen, Education Specialist, Utah State Office of Education; Claudia Wasden, Principal, David Gourley Elementary School, Granite School District; Roger C. Mouritsen, Coordinator, Utah State Office of Education; and Keith D. Steck, Education Specialist, Utah State Office of Education.

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POSITION STATEMENT

Paraprofessionals in Education

The philosophical basis for the use of paraprofessionals in education is to provide educators more time to practice, and to reflect on, their professional responsibilities and opportunities.

Paraprofessionals are engaged to augment rather than to replace certified educators in their professional role. The paraprofessional is at all times an *assistant*, and *responsible to a member of the professional staff* in charge of the service. The educator's primary responsibility is to children; whereas, the primary responsibility of the paraprofessional is to the educator.

Assignments clearly professional may not be delegated to a paraprofessional

It is inappropriate to hire certified educators as paraprofessionals for a reduced salary and then utilize them in place of teachers. However, if by clear understanding and common consent, certified teachers are willing to accept a paraprofessional position and to function in that role as herein defined, that would be appropriate.

Principles:

1. Paraprofessionals shall be utilized to provide only those services not considered to be professional (as defined on pages 10 and 11) thereby giving teachers more time to perform their professional functions.

2. The assignment of a paraprofessional to a classroom shall not be used as justification to increase the size of the class.

3. Teachers shall be consulted before a paraprofessional is assigned to work with them to ensure that a clear understanding of duties and responsibilities exists.

4. A preparation program for the utilization of paraprofessionals, is strongly recommended for teachers, principals, and other supervisory personnel.

5. It is also recommended that teachers and paraprofessionals receive inservice education as a team. This inservice to be provided by the district with the cooperation of the professional association and be commensurate with assigned responsibility.

6. Paraprofessionals should be assigned on the basis of interests and qualifications and specific needs of students and the person or persons with whom they work.

DEFINITIONS

Professional Personnel

Professional educators are certificated personnel who are responsible for instruction, for instructional services, and for student personnel services in the school. It is the responsibility of the professional educator:

1. To diagnose learning needs of students;

2. To, on the basis of cooperative planning, prescribe educational programs for students in accordance with their identified needs;

3. To interpret and evaluate the results of instruction and testing; and

4. To determine responsibilities and assign duties to paraprofessionals.

Paraprofessionals

Any person assigned under the authority of the local school district to assist members of the instructional staff in carrying out their instructional and/or professional responsibilities.

Paid Paraprofessionals

Persons employed to work under the direction of a professional educator on tasks which are nonprofessional in nature.

Volunteers

Anyone who provides a nonpaid service to the school. Service is frequently offered in a specialized area such as art, music, story-telling, physical education, or typing.

Student Assistants

1. High school and upper elementary students may assist in a school on a released-time basis.

2. College students preparing to be educators may serve for a specific period of time as a required early experience.

Precept is instruction written in the sand.
The tide flows over it, and the record is gone.
Example is graven on the rock,
and the lesson is not soon lost.

Channing

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Experience indicates that strong leadership is vital if paraprofessionals are to make a significant contribution to a more efficient and effective educational climate for teaching and learning.

Objectives, developed in advance by a team of interested and enthusiastic educators, are important to give direction and meaning to how the use of paraprofessionals can significantly improve the school. **The following is a list of suggested objectives:**

1. To provide more efficient and effective utilization of educator time and capability.

2. To improve educational opportunities of educationally deprived students.

3. To improve the morale of the staff and the students, thereby improving the atmosphere for learning and teaching.

The following suggestions may help to achieve the objectives of the program:

1. The educator and paraprofessional should have time to plan together.

2. The skills of the paraprofessional should be matched with the service desired by the educator.

3. There should be a training program, preferably with the educator and paraprofessional together.

4. It should be clearly understood that the educator is in authority and the presence of the paraprofessional should not lessen the responsibility of the educator to maintain control of the program.

5. If a substitute is required for a teacher, the substitute should be as well qualified as possible in order to assume the responsibilities of the teacher.

6. The paraprofessional program should be evaluated continuously.

7. The total staff should be part of planning for the paraprofessionals.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Paraprofessionals should be selected on the basis of:

1. An application form including:

    a. Education
    b. Prior experience
    c. Recommendations

2. An interview with both administrator and teacher or other immediate supervisor.

It is especially important that the teacher be consulted in the selection of the person with whom he or she will be working.

3. A test of competency in the area of work, if deemed necessary.

4. Successful completion of a reasonable trial period of work.

Appropriate attention should be given to the recruitment of ethnic minorities.

Preservice, as well as inservice, training programs should involve not only paraprofessionals, but teachers and administrators as well.

Preservice

Paraprofessionals should:

1. Participate in preservice training sessions. The training sessions should include:

   a. Orientation to the school building where the paraprofessional is assigned and all other facilities of the school district that will help make the person "feel a part of the staff."

   b. An explanation of the educational objectives of the school.

   c. Basic training in child growth and development; how children learn; practical assistance in emergencies; and the use of library/media materials and equipment, including how to arrange, display and exhibit materials, or other instruction applicable to their assignment.

   d. A description of job opportunities and career advancement.

   e. An explanation of the expected working relationships with the professional and non-teaching employees, and practical ethics.

   f. The interpretation of written policies relative to "trial periods," grievance procedures, observation, conferences, assignment schedule, evaluation, reassignment and dismissal.

g. A thorough orientation with the educator to whom assigned. **It is imperative that this certificated educator participate in the training session.**

h. Motivational experiences to help the paraprofessional develop a positive self-image and competence in working with learners.

i. An orientation regarding the limitations of responsibilities.

2. Participate in the opening-of-school routine.

3. Plan to participate in appropriate inservice activities.

4. Complete all necessary paper work required by the district to ensure complete understanding about pay periods, take-home pay, working conditions, fringe benefits, and withholding procedures, if applicable.

Inservice

The district administrator should:

Establish a formalized follow-up training program based upon the preservice sessions. The plan shall include the continued development of paraprofessionals' skills and positive attitudes as identified by the use of evaluation instruments, personal requests and supervisory observations. Training should include the following:

1. Emphasis on the human relations aspect of working with children in the schools.

2. Instruction in first aid.

3. Instruction in the use of library/media materials and equipment.

4. Individual evaluations and discussions of their work by supervising professional personnel.

5. Seminars and workshops to assist them in improving and updating their service to the program.

6. Opportunities to prepare themselves for an advanced paraprofessional status. Every effort should be made to give paraprofessionals in education credit for competencies they already possess or for those they acquire on the job in order that they might progress. Advancement should, therefore, be related to competencies evident in the performance of the individual and not just the completion of prescribed workshops and university courses.

EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE TASKS FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS

1. Understanding and operating the equipment available in the school.
2. Making instructional materials (transparencies, etc.).
3. Making audio/video tape recordings.
4. Accompanying students on the piano.
5. Collecting money.
6. Typing.
7. Marking roll books.
8. Correcting papers with key.
9. Totaling scores at end of term.
10. Filing.
11. Keeping records.
12. Statistical reporting.
13. Inventorying books and supplies.
14. Checking books in and out.
15. Obtaining resource materials.
16. Issuing and collecting student supplies.
17. Mixing paint and preparing art materials.
18. Putting up, taking down, and constructing bulletin boards.
19. Putting up board work teacher has prepared.
20. Pinning up students' work.

21. Mounting pictures, etc.
22. Sharing lunch, recess, and playground duty.
23. Monitoring science labs.
24. Monitoring examinations.
25. Supervising study areas and halls.
26. Helping in supervision of field trips.
27. Helping care for sick children.
28. Assisting young children with coats and boots.
29. Escorting groups to library.

EXAMPLES OF IN-APPROPRIATE TASKS

1. Teach groups or individuals.
2. Substitute for a teacher.
3. Present technical information.
4. Make a decision as to the welfare of students.
5. Interpret school policies.
6. Decide what is needed in supplies, materials, equipment and textbooks.
7. Counsel with parents.
8. Administer examinations.

The school must be guided in all things by a recognition of human individuality. Each pupil is unique. He is different in background, in interests, moods, and tastes. This uniqueness deeply affects his learning for he can react to the school only in terms of the person he is. No two pupils necessarily learn the same thing from a common learning experience.

The school must not only recognize differences among pupils; it must deal with each pupil as an individual.

The Educational Policies Commission, 1961

PARAPROFESSIONAL EVALUATION FORM

Name _____

Date of Employment _____

School or Department _____

Rating Scale: 1. Acceptable
2. Needs Improvement
3. Unsatisfactory

PERFORMANCE

___ Ability to learn details quickly
___ Communication skills
___ Acts with a minimum of instruction
___ Rapport with students
___ Completes assignments on time
___ Skillful in the use of materials
___ Accurate and thorough
___ Attentive to routine matters
___ Cooperates well with teachers
___ Care of equipment and supplies
___ Management skills

PERSONAL QUALITIES

___ Neatness
___ Personal appearance
___ Attendance
___ Promptness
___ Confidentiality
___ Fairness and impartiality
___ Accepts suggestions
___ Language
___ Attitude
___ Interest
___ Self-improvement

Paraprofessional's strengths _____

_____

Recommendations for improvement _____

_____

Type of inservice received? _____

_____

Comments _____

RECOMMENDATION: Retention _____
Dismissal _____

Rating, review and comments made by:

Name _____

Position _____

Employee's Signature _____

Date _____

Jay B. Taggart
State Superintendent of Public Instruction